

Faithfulness unto Death in the service of
CHRIST, gratuitously rewarded with
a Crown of Life.

A

S E R M O N,

Preached at the opening of the ASSOCIATE SYNOD, at
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GAL. vi. 9.

*And let us not be weary in well-doing : For in due season we
shall reap, if we faint not.*

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REV. ii. 10. last clause.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

THESE words are a part of that sweet and comfortable epistle, which John, the Disciple whom Jesus loved, wrote by Divine direction, unto the Angel of the Church in Smyrna, in Asia the lesser. In which, as the case of this Church did greatly differ from the condition of some of the rest to whom he also wrote, and that, both in respect of suffering and integrity: The message sent to her, is likewise very dissimilar to those directed to them. There is no charge exhibited against this Church; but all that is spoken to her, runs in the amiable stile of commendation and approbation. Not, that we are once to suppose, that either ministers or people were altogether without failings and short-comings in the way of duty; but they were free from gross heresies and scandals, sincerely aiming at their duty in their places and stations; and all this, amidst the perplexing disadvantages of poverty and persecution: And therefore her kind and sympathizing Head, was graciously pleased to pass over her infirmities.

In the preface to this Epistle, our Lord Jesus takes such names and designations to himself, as tended best to suit the case and circumstances of those to whom it was directed. These things, saith the first and the last, who was dead, and is alive. He who was dead, that he might procure the Crown of Life for you, and is alive again, to set it upon your heads when once your course is finished.

In the body of the epistle, our Lord declares, that he was not only most intimately acquainted with the present condition of this Church, but he likewise informs her, that her future trials were already present to his all-seeing eye. “ I know thy works, and tribulations, and po-

“ verty ; but thou art rich,” rich in faith and good works, though outwardly poor, poor in reality, and poor in the world’s esteem. He comforts her under present trials, and encourages her in the prospect of future tribulations. *I know thy works*, that is, I approve of thy works : And such a declaration was truly comforting for the present. And as to what she had yet to suffer, he saith, *Fear none of these things* : Which words, taken in their connection, are not merely to be taken as an exhortation to duty, but as also containing a promise of all needful comfort and support under whatever sufferings were yet before her hand. And in the faith’s persuasion of this being her privilege, she is exhorted to persevere in the way of duty to the end ; knowing, her labour should not be in vain in the Lord : “ Be thou faithful unto death, “ and I will give thee a crown of life.” In which words, 1st, We have a most pathetic exhortation tendered, *Be thou faithful unto death*.

2^{dly}, A most sweet and encouraging motive to enforce the exhortation. *I will give thee a crown of life*.

In the exhortation we may notice,

1. To whom it is directed ; and that is to the angel, ministry, or office-bearers in the Church of Smyrna, as is obvious from the direction of the epistle, ver. 8. Yet, the exhortation is not so to them as to exclude the people under their charge ; being equally bound, in their places and stations, to the performance of the duty enjoined, with those who were over them in the Lord ; and standing in as much need of direction, in the way of duty, and encouragement in order to their persevering therein to the end, as they did.

2. We have the exhortation itself, *Be thou faithful*. As if our Lord had said, stedfastly maintain your faith in, faithfulness to, and dependence upon me in the several stations wherein I have called you to act.

3. We may observe the period set to the duty of faithfulness in the service of Christ ; namely, the moment of our departure out of this world. “ Be thou faithful “ unto death.” There may be some of you, as if our Lord had said, who may have to ~~resist~~ *resist* unto blood in the way



way of faithfulness to me. And, if it should be so, faithfulness is still your indispensable duty ; and what the Spirit said to this Church, he is still saying to all the churches of the saints. He is in the same manner bespeaking every one of us, Be thou faithful unto death ; faithful unto the last, whatever your so being hath, or may yet cost you.

In the motive to enforce the exhortation, notice,

1. A gracious reward annexed to faithfulness. A crown. I will give thee a crown. This promised crown, is expressive of all that glory and felicity, the saints are eternally to possess in the world to come.

2. We may observe the nature and quality of this crown ; and it is, without controversy, of all crowns the most to be desired ; a Crown of life. Eternal glory is here designed a crown of life, as opposed to the present condition of this Church, and to what some in it were likely to lose for Christ, viz. a natural life. Our Lord promises, that though they should lay down a temporal life in his service, they should most certainly be crowned with all the felicity and glory of an eternal one.

3. We may observe how this crown is to be conferred, and that is in the way of free gift. Our Lord does not say, be faithful unto death, and so merit a crown of life unto yourselves. No, but be thou faithful unto death, and I will most freely and gratuitously give you the crown. Though this enriching and dignifying crown is only to be expected in the way of our being faithful in the service of Christ, yet, it is by no means to be bestowed upon us on the account of our faithfulness.

4. We may observe from whom this crown is to be expected, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. He who is the first and the last ; and who was dead, and is alive again. He who was graciously pleased to wear the crown of thorns and the purple robe, that we might wear the crown of life, and the garments of salvation. He who once had the burden of purchasing the crown of life, and now enjoys the honour actually to bestow it upon all the heirs of promise.

5. *Lastly*, We may observe the certainty of the promise ; I, says Christ, *will give thee a crown of life.* I promise

mise it to you, I who am *the Amen, the faithful and true Witness*, and so cannot deceive you. Be thou faithful, and I will not fail to give thee the crown. He may justly command what he will, who can both promise and also perform whatever he pleases.

From this view of the words, we observe the following doctrine.

DOCT. As our Lord Jesus requires, that all who serve him, do it faithfully, whatever their doing so may cost them : So he has, for their encouragement, graciously engaged himself, by promise, in due time, to crown them with eternal life.

In speaking to this doctrine, as the Lord may be pleased to enable, The method I shall observe, is,

I. To speak of the duty enjoined, *be thou faithful unto death.*

II. Offer some thoughts concerning the gracious reward, *the crown of life.*

III. Enquire a little into the connection there is betwixt faithfulness unto death in the service of Christ, and the enjoyment of the crown of life.

IV. Make some improvement of the whole.

The first thing is, to speak of the duty enjoined, “ Be thou faithful unto death.” And we shall, on this occasion, chiefly consider it as respecting the ministers of Christ, except in so far as it may fall under consideration in the improvement of the subject, as respecting all who serve our Lord Jesus, in whatever station. The duty of ministerial faithfulness then, may be viewed, as respecting a three-fold object : *1st*, Jesus Christ their great Lord and Master. *2^{dly}*, Themselves. *3^{dly}*, The people committed to their charge.

1st, The ministers of Christ are, to be faithful to him : To be so is their indispensable duty, their greatest honour ; and, through grace, it will be their highest ambition.

tion. Now, for ministers of the gospel to be faithful to Christ, will be found to include the following things :

1. Their having his call to act in that high and honourable station. None can act faithfully for Christ, who runs unsent. Our Lord himself, took not upon him the honour of the Mediatorial office without his Father's call and appointment ; Heb. v. 4, 5. " And no man taketh " this honour unto himself, but he who is called of God, " as was Aaron : So also Christ glorified not himself to be " made an High Priest ; but he who said unto him, Thou " art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." Faithful Prophets were sent, and Apostles and Evangelists had their commission from Christ ; and though extraordinary gifts and office-bearers, are now ceased, and an immediate call to the ministry, no more to be expected : Yet, the Lord still continues to call men to the work of the gospel, in an ordinary and mediate way ; and that by inclining their hearts to serve him in the gospel of his Son, furnishing them with a competent measure of gifts and prudence ; and opening a door in his providence, by which they may enter into his service, in an orderly and regular manner.

2. Faith in Christ. Faithfulness to him, springs from faith in him. To be faithful to Christ, is to please God ; but without faith, it is impossible to please him ; Heb. xi. 6. David saith, " I have believed, therefore have I spoken." And to the same purpose speaks the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 13. " We having the same spirit of faith, according as " it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken : " We also believe, and therefore speak."

3. Some tolerable measure of knowledge and acquaintance with the several parts of the work and service he calls for at their hands. All faithful service performed to Christ, is founded in the knowledge of his will, as manifested in his word : And all who are in reality his faithful servants, have not only a speculative knowledge of his will as externally revealed ; but also some measure of saving and internal acquaintance therewith. All who have ever been brought to believe in Christ, and to act faithfully for him, have heard and learned of the Father ; John vi. 45. They

They have that knowledge of divine things, that flesh and blood cannot give, but our Father who is in heaven.

4. A cordial and hearty acquiescing in, and compliance with their Master's will, so far as they discern and take it up, without consulting with flesh and blood, or setting up self-will, wisdom, or carnal ease, in competition therewith. The Apostle Paul, that most eminently faithful servant of Jesus Christ, tells us, that when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, that he should preach him among the heathen, he did not confer with flesh and blood, Gal. i. 16.

5. A real and hearty concern for the advancement of his honour and declarative glory, in every part of the work he employs them in where faithfulness to Christ really obtains among the ministers of the gospel. In preaching the word, there will be a single eye to his glory, in the salvation of their souls among whom they labour. They will not preach themselves; seek their own honour, nor hunt after the applause of men; but will, through grace, sincerely endeavour that God in all things may be glorified, 2 Cor. iv. 5. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake." In their judicative capacities, they will faithfully endeavour to judge for the Lord, who, in their so doing, is with them in the judgment. They will be conscientiously careful to decide controversies, and apply the censures of the Church without knowing faces, or acting partially: Well knowing, that the soul of the peasant is as precious in the sight of their great Lord, as that of the prince. The spirit of God calls ministers to be faithful in this matter, in the most pressing and solemn manner, 1 Tim. v. 20, 21. "Them who sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."

In so far as they are instrumental in putting men into the ministry, they will be careful to commit the word of reconciliation into the hands of faithful men; at least faithful as they suppose; 2 Tim. ii. 2. "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same

same commit thou to faithful men, " who shall be able " to teach others also ;" and to the same purpose is that we have, 1 Tim. v. 22. " Lay hands suddenly on " no man, neither be partaker of other mens sins ; keep " thyself pure." It is most sinful for those who are naughty to press themselves into the ministry ; and in so far as any are instrumental in giving encouragement to such, they are partakers with them in their sin.

6. Faithfulness to Christ has in it an earnest and hearty concern for the maintenance of the truth, and the preservation of the purity of all his ordinances. Faithful ministers are set for the defence of the gospel of Christ, and disposed through grace, to keep by the word of his patience, Rev. iii. 10. Which may be understood of any of the truths of Christ, which comes more immediately to be controverted and opposed by men of corrupt minds.

7. *Lastly*, To be faithful unto Christ in the work of the ministry, has in it, not only a real desire to serve their own generation, according to the will of God, but also, the using of their best endeavours to hand down a testimony for the purity of gospel doctrine, discipline and worship to the generations yet to come. As also, for that form of government the Lord Jesus has appointed to be observed in the church ; which form of government is neither Erastian on the one hand, nor Independent on the other ; but Presbyterial. Consisting in the due subordination of one judicatory to another. As is clear from Math. xviii. 15,—19. chap. xvi. 19. Acts xiii. 1,—4. 1 Tim. iv. 14. Acts xv. with many other texts which might be adduced. That Presbytery is the only form of government the Lord Jesus has appointed to be observed in the Church, is made evident to every unprejudiced mind, in the propositions concerning Church-government, bound in with our excellent Confession of Faith ; together with several other learned tracts, which have been wrote on that subject by divines, eminent both for learning and piety ; and these not only in this, but also in our neighbouring kingdoms, in their contending for Presbytery against Erastians on the one side, and those of the Independent persuasion on the other. A testimony for these

things, such as would desire mercy of the Lord to be faithful, will be concerned to transmit to posterity. This we are, by the Spirit of God, most earnestly called to do, Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6, 7. " He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." The same duty is enjoined us, Psal. xlviii. 12, 13, 14. " Walk about Zion, and go round about her: Tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

2dly, Ministers of the gospel are to be faithful to themselves; and if they would be so indeed, they will find it absolutely needful to be unite to the person of Christ by faith, as their Saviour and Redeemer: That their hearts be right with God, and sound in his statutes. They will find themselves under an indispensable necessity to make a home and particular application of the truths they deliver unto others, to their own souls. If they would be found faithful to themselves, they will endeavour in the strength of grace, to put the duties in practice themselves which they recommend to their hearers. While they keep the vineyard of the church, they will carefully watch over their own. They will not fail to endeavour to set the duties of religion before their people, not only in the pulpit, but also by a tender and circumspect walk and conversation. If these and such like things are not to be found in the character of the gospel ministers, after they have preached Christ to others, they may themselves be cast-away, and in the end be led furth with the workers of iniquity, 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27. " I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

3dly, Ministerial

3dly, Ministerial faithfulness has a respect to those of whose souls ministers of the gospel under Christ have the charge. And for ministers to be faithful to those they are over in the Lord, carries in it :

1. Their preaching sound doctrine, free from and unmixed with the leaven of error and heresy. Concerning this, the apostle Paul gives Titus a charge, and in him all the ministers of Christ to the end of time, chap. ii. 1. " But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." And he adds, ver. 7, 8. " In doctrine shewing " uncorruptness, sound speech that cannot be condemned." And Timothy is exhorted to hold fast the form of sound words, 2 Tim. i. 13. These and the many like directions tendered in the word of God, ministers of the gospel must carefully attend unto, as they would be found faithful to those committed to their charge; and for that end, should be much in the study of the scriptures, joined with fervent prayer, that the Spirit of God may guide them into all the truth, according to our Lord's most gracious promise, John xvi. 12, 13. They should moreover, give themselves to the reading of approved systems of divinity; among which our excellent standards justly claim the precedence, and, comparing scripture with scripture, they ought to give the most heedful attention to the analogy of faith.

2. A real endeavour, according to their capacity and measure of knowledge, to keep back nothing from their hearers, that they judge, as in the sight of God, may tend to the edification of their souls. This is what the apostle Paul calls the *not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God*, Acts xx. 27. And while nothing is to be kept back, faithful ministers will not fail to insist most upon these truths which are of greatest moment and weight. Such as the depravity of man's nature, his misery of consequence, with his utter inability to do any thing for his own recovery out of the snare of the devil. The way of his recovery by virtue of the undertaking, incarnation, life, death, resurrection and intercession of the Son of God. The truths respecting the person of Christ, his fulness of saving offices, and justifying and sanctifying grace. With
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the way in which sinful men come really to have an interest in him, with all his riches of grace and glory; which is only by union to his person, through the faith of his spirit's operation; Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God."

3. Ministers who would be found faithful to those under their charge, will find it highly needful to take heed, how, as well as what they preach.

They will find cause to do it plainly, in imitation of him whose alone province it is to declare the whole counsel of God. He preached most plainly. When he was pleased to use similitudes, tho' he could have fetched them from the heights above, or from the deeps beneath; yet, he was pleased to take them from these objects and customs with which his hearers were most intimately acquainted. Yea, so very condescending was he in his manner of teaching, that he sometimes speaks as if he had been at a loss to know how he might best adapt his discourse to the capacities of his hearers; Mark xiv. 30. "Whereunto (saith he,) shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it?"

They will find it highly expedient, to set the truths of the gospel before their people, in a clear, distinct, concise and connected manner; so as that the connection with, and dependence of one truth upon another, may readily appear to their understandings. Those truths they bring forth unto their hearers, they are to seek out, and set in order before hand, after the example of the Royal Preacher in Israel, Eccl. xii. 9. Such as desire to be faithful to the souls of those for whom they watch, will not put them off with that which cost them nothing.

Faithfulness, as to the manner of preaching the gospel, carries in it, the delivering of the truth with such a measure of boldness, gravity and earnestness, as may give the hearers to know, they are really in earnest to have their message received. Thus dealt the apostle Paul with those to whom he preached and wrote, Rom. xii. 1. "I beseech you," says he to the Romans, "Brethren, by
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“ the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Moreover, they must lay before their hearers, the greatness of their sin, with the danger they will expose themselves unto, if they receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved. They must be given to know, that such as believe not, shall be damned, Mark xvi. 16. And that final neglectors of the salvation exhibited in the gospel, can by no means escape the punishment of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all those who do believe.

4. For ministers to be faithful to those under their charge, includes their exciting and stirring them up carefully to maintain good works, Tit. iii. 8. “ This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works : These things are good and profitable unto men.” And while they thus call them to performance of the duties of religion, they will not fail at the same time, to lay before them the true springs of gospel holiness. Namely, deliverance from the law as a covenant of works, faith’s union to the person of Christ, with constant dependence upon the Spirit of God in his grace and gracious influences, for assistance in order to the acceptable performance of every duty. These things we find our Lord insisted much upon to his disciples, John xv. 4. “ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine : No more can ye, except ye abide in me.” And verse 8. he adds, “ without me ye can do nothing.”

And while they must give men to know, that their strength for the performance of duty is only in Christ ; they are, with all possible care, to guard them against trusting to their duties, and religious performances, as being a foundation upon which they are either in whole, or in the smallest degree, to build their hope of eternal life. “ For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” Gal. ii. 16. and, adds the same Apostle, v. 21. “ I do not frustrate the grace of God : For if righteousness
“ come

“ come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Tho’ the end everlasting life, and the means leading thereunto, must not, and will not be put assunder by such as would enjoy the crown of life. Yet, it is not to be expected by any, because they use these means, but only in the way of the believing improvement of them.

5. If ministers would be faithful to the flocks committed to their charge, they must be willing to spend, and be spent for their souls good and edification, and that tho’ it should some times so fall out, that the more they evidence their love to them in the faithful discharge of their duty, the less they be beloved of them. They must endeavour to strengthen the weak, comfort the downcast, sympathise with the tempted, warn the unruly, rebook, reprove and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. All this is contained in what the Apostle Paul tells us he aimed at in all his administrations, Col. i. 28, 29. “ We preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus : Whereunto I also labour striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”

We shall only further add upon this head, that this duty of faithfulness, as it respects the above threefold object; is to be persisted in unto the end. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Men are not crowned, except they strive lawfully. Apparent faithfulness for a while, will not be found a proper compliance with this exhortation, Gal. iii. 4. Ministers who would be found faithful, must count nothing dear, no not life itself, if so be they would finish their course with joy, and the ministry committed unto them, Acts xx. 24. All the opposition they may meet with in the way of duty, and all the scandal that may be cast upon the ways of God by a profane world on the one hand, or by the backsliding and apostasy of professed friends upon the other, must not prevail with them to take their hand from the plough : But they must remember the words of the Lord Jesus ; “ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

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II. The *second* head was to offer some thoughts concerning the gracious reward, promised by Christ to all who serve him faithfully in whatever station he is pleased in his providence to put them; and it is here called a crown of life. And as we are hereby to understand all that honour, felicity and glory, of which the saints are to be possessed in the heavenly rest.

First, We may consider the glory in reserve for the saints, as a crown.

Secondly, As a crown of life.

It was first proposed to consider the glory in reserve for the saints as a crown. Wherefore is the glory to be revealed, called a crown?

1. It is so called, to point furth the exceeding greatness of that honour and dignity to be conferred upon the people of God in the heavenly rest. A crown is an emblem of majesty, and denotes the kingly and imperial dignity, wherewith they are to be invested. They are the children of the king, the King of kings. Yea, they are themselves kings and priests unto God, Rev. i. 6. They are in their regeneration, born heirs unto a kingdom that cannot be moved, and which it is their Father's good pleasure to give them, Luke xii. 32. And they must have a crown; and for a throne, the Captain of Salvation will give them to sit with him in his throne, Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh, will I give to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

2. Glory is called a crown, to set furth the fulness and perfection of the felicity of the saints. A crown is of that figure and make, that it incircles the whole head; and the saints will be possessed of glory, both objectively, in their being admitted into the immediate vision and fruition of God, and subjectively, in their likeness and conformity to him. Hence saith the Apostle John in his first epistle, chap. iii. 2. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: For we shall see him as he is." And to the same purpose is that we have, Psal. xvii. 15. "I will behold thy

“ thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I
 “ awake, with thy likeness.”

3. Glory is called a crown, to point furth the period at which the saints are to be admitted to the full enjoyment thereof; and that is not until they shall be made compleatly conquerors over all their spiritual enemies, through him who loved them. Our Lord seems here to allude to some of the customs of running or wrestling, which obtained much in the eastern countries, where those who proved victorious, were crowned with some garland or crown, as an emblem of victory and conquest, 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25. “ Know ye not, (saith the Apostle,) “ that they who run in a race, run all, but one receiveth “ the prize; so run that ye may obtain. And every man “ who striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: “ Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but “ we an incorruptible.”

Secondly, It was proposed upon this head, to consider the glory to be conferred upon the saints as a crown of life. It is called a crown of righteousness, 2 Tim. iv. 8. Henceforth, says the great Apostle of the Gentiles, “ There “ is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the “ Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day:” And lest any should be ready to think this crown is in reserve only for prophets, apostles and other faithful ministers, he adds, “ And not to me only, but to all them al- “ so who love his appearing.”

It is called a crown of glory, 1 Pet. v. 4. where, after exhorting gospel ministers to faithfulness and diligence as an encouragement thereto, he adds, “ And when the “ chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of “ glory that fadeth not away.”

In James i. 12. it is designed, as in the text, a crown of life. “ Blessed is the man who endureth temptation: “ For when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, “ which the Lord hath promised to them who love him.” Now,

1. Glory may be called a crown of life, to put us in mind of what we lost by our fall and apostasy in the first Adam. By our breach of covenant in him, we forfeited
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our temporal life to the justice of God, we lost a life of fellowship with God on earth ; and gave up with all title and claim to eternal life in heaven. Life, eternal life, is the great blessing men have lost by the breach of the first covenant ; and it is the great and leading blessing procured for them by the fulfilment of the second ; Tit. i. 2. " In hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, promised before the world began ;" And, saith the Apostle, Rom. vi. 23. " The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

2. Glory may be called a crown of life, to set forth the mysterious nature thereof. Life has in it something which is full of mystery. And the Apostle tells us, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them who love him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. And the same Apostle, when speaking elsewhere of the glory to be revealed, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. He calls it a weight ; a great weight ; an exceeding great weight ; and an eternal weight of glory. All which expressions, do, in the most ample manner, set before us the inconceivable and mysterious nature of the heavenly inheritance.

3. It may be called life, because life is of all things the most sweet and desirable. Satan, for once spoke the truth, tho' of bad design, when he said, " All that a man hath will he give for his life," Job ii. 4. And if a temporal life, imbittered with so many trials, as are become unavoidable by reason of sin, be so very desirable, what must an eternal one, crowned with all possible felicity, really prove to be ?

4. Glory may be called life, to set forth the activity of the saints in glory. Where there is life, there is action. Heaven will not only be found to be a place of retreat from toil, labour and sorrow ; but also a place of most active service. There the inhabitants rest not day nor night, nor yet say they are weary, Rev. iv. 8. What their employment is, either as to matter or manner, the day will best declare : Only we are sure, the high praises of redeeming love, will forever fill the hearts and mouths of the ransomed of the Lord ; Isa. xxxv. 10. " And the

“ ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion
 “ with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: They
 “ shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing
 “ shall flee away.” And to this agree the words of the
 Apostle; Rev. v. 9. “ And they sung a new song, say-
 “ ing, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open
 “ the seals thereof: For thou wast slain, and has re-
 “ deemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred,
 “ and tongue, and people, and nation.”

5. Glory is here called a crown of life as opposed to what some in this Church were likely to lose for Christ. They had such an intimation, as that some of them at least, might lay their account with suffering martyrdom in their Master's cause. And it is very ordinary in scripture, to meet with the heavenly glory set forth by such expressions as tend to oppose it to the various calamities the people of God are most frequently trilled with in a present world; such as treasure for the poor, rest for the weary, and joy for the mourner. So here our Lord saith, be not afraid to lay down a temporal life, if I shall call for it; for when you have so done, you shall take up an eternal one, attended with the most consummate joy and felicity.

6. *Lastly*, Glory is called *a crown of life*, to set forth the durable and lasting nature thereof. Heaven is an undefiled inheritance, and therefore, it fadeth not away. This crown shall not wither, nor will the head decay from under it; but to eternity it shall flourish, when temporal kingdoms and crowns, pomp and splendor shall be no more. For there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore.

III. The *third* thing in the method was, to touch a little at the connection betwixt faithfulness to the death in the service of Christ, and the enjoyment of the crown of life. And,

1. Let it be observed, that there is no casual or meritorious connection. No, to affirm there is, would be to fly in the face of the leading and chief design of God in the whole œconomy of redemption, which is to shew the
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exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus. Free and rich grace shines furth in the contrivance of redemption, Job xxxiii. 24. in the purchase of it, 2 Cor. viii. 9. And it is no less conspicuous and manifest in the application thereof, Eph. ii. 8. And the glory to be revealed, is called *grace*, 1 Pet. i. 13. And the *mercy* of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jude ver. 21.

2. There is nevertheless a connection betwixt faithfulness to the death, and the crown. And that,

1. In the purpose of God, those of whom he has been pleased to make choice to life everlasting, to them he purposed to give grace in time; and perseverance in it to the end; and then to crown grace with glory; Rom. viii. 30. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: And whom he called, them he also justified: And whom he justified, them he also glorified."

2. In the promise of God, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." A gracious God, tho' he cannot make himself our debtor, has nevertheless been pleased to make himself debtor to his own faithfulness pledged in the promise. Hence saith the Apostle, "God is not unrighteous," that is, he is not unfaithful "to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister," Heb. vi. 10. The crown then is to be expected in the way of being faithful; but not on the account of our faithfulness, but on account of the free and faithful promise of God confirmed with the precious blood of Jesus.

3. *Lastly*, There is a connection betwixt faithfulness and the enjoyment of the crown of life, in respect of evidence. When any are brought by grace to act faithfully for Christ, and enabled to hold out faithfully to the end; it is a comfortable evidence to themselves, that theirs is the kingdom of God. It has also a tendency in some measure, to evidence it to others; Rev. xxii. 14. "Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates unto the city." As if our Lord had said, blessed are they who keep the commandments of God, and by their so doing, having evidenced themselves

to be my real disciples and faithful servants; shall have authority and dignity vouchsafed to them by my free grant, to enter upon the full possession of all the blessed fruits which spring from me the tree of life. But it is now time we make some improvement of the subject, which was the last thing proposed in the method. And,

The *first* use of the doctrine may be of information :

1. Then, Is a call from Christ to the work of the ministry necessary in order to faithfulness to him in that work? Then we may see what to think of such as rush into the ministerial function, without any proper call thereto. There are many in our day, who assume the character of ministers unto themselves, without any call whatsoever, except it be some enthusiastical impulse within themselves. And besides these, there are many who climb up into the pulpit by the way of a presentation, from one who, perhaps, is no friend either to Church or State; and instead of waiting the call of those among whom they propose to labour, How many intrude themselves, or are intruded upon the heritage of God, over the belly of all the opposition they have it in their power to make? And with many of them, the event in the case of the flock is, as our Lord tells us it would prove, John x. 5. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: For they know not the voice of strangers." Such as run unsent, and they who hear them, would need seriously to consider what the Spirit of God affirms concerning both, Jer. xxiii. 21. 32. "I have not sent these Prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.—Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." From the above texts, and many others which might be mentioned; it is evident, that whatever the Lord may do in sovereignty by the ministry of such as have not his call; they who hear them, have no scriptural ground upon which they can expect to be profited by them: Nor can they with confidence, pray for a blessing upon their ministrations.

2. We may see that ministers who are careless about the condition of their own souls, can never be faithful to
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our Lord Jesus Christ. Tho' such may have gifts, and not be altogether without success; yet, they cannot be faithful, nor have the eye single for the glory of God in the duties they perform; however good those may be as to the matter of them. How can they, who are untender of their own souls, be really concerned for the welfare of the souls of others? How can such as neglect the worship of God in their families, at least in the morning, recommend it to their hearers to offer unto God the morning and evening sacrifice? How can those, who can with freedom go into, and join with the company of promiscuous dancers, recommend sobriety, chastity and gravity to their hearers? And yet many such there are at this day, who call themselves the ministers of Jesus.

3. We may see what to think of such ministers as are not concerned, to the utmost of their power, to make known the whole mystery of the gospel, the whole counsel of God to their hearers; but keep upon general topics of discourse, without entering into cases of conscience, or applying their doctrine against the prevailing errors and sinful practices of the times; and all this partly owing to a careless disposition, or fear of offending the gay and fashionable part of their audience. While such lay out themselves thus to please men, other than to their edification; they need to consider, that in so far as this prevails with them, they are serving men, and not our Lord Jesus, Gal. i. 10. "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

4. We may see how culpable those ministers are, who do not make it their study and endeavour, to lay the truths of the gospel plainly before their hearers; but either through inattention, or a worse principle; wrap up the truths of the gospel in obscure and ambiguous phrases, and modes of expression, by which means, many who hear them cannot be profited. This, with an affected niceness in the manner of delivery, is what the Apostle Paul calls preaching with the enticing words of man's wisdom, 1 Cor. ii. 4. But what have the wisdom of words, and the enticing words of man's wisdom to do in the matter of preaching a crucified Christ? Seeing, there is no design
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of God more obvious in the whole œconomy of redemption, than to confound carnal wisdom. I shall only observe here, that tho' an affected way of preaching the gospel, and the pains taken by some, to embellish it with the flowers of human rhetoric, may please some and offend others, it can profit none; being such a manner of preaching Christ, as is expressly disallowed by the Holy Ghost.

5. Does it belong to the character of faithful ministers of Christ, to bear testimony to all his truths, ordinances and institutions, and especially to such of them as are either opposed or slighted in their day? Then we may see what to think of some who have of late got up amongst us, who, tho' they profess to oppose themselves to some of the sinful measures carried on by the judicatories of our national Church, yet, quite overlook any particular testimony for the purity of doctrines, and are so far from bearing any testimony for that form of government the Lord Jesus appointed to be observed in the Church, that they are not ashamed to hold themselves forth to the world, as ready to hold ministerial and christian communion with Episcopalians, Independents, or any else, whom their charity may incline them to judge belong to the household of faith, as occasion may serve, whatever their principles be. Is this faithfully to serve our Lord Jesus? Or yet to evidence that much boasted of charity and Catholic love, either to the present or rising generation? Or is it not to say, either Christ has not appointed any certain form of Church-government; or if he has, is it not to say, it is not worth the contending for. or taking any particular notice of? But those men may be ready to say, are their not among the various denominations of Christians, such as have communion with the Head? And if so, we cannot refuse to receive them in Church-communion also. We shall only observe as to this, we are far from denying but there are among Episcopalians and Independents, such as really belong to the household of faith: And we as readily grant, that there is an invisible union to, and communion with Christ, which are the privileges of all true believers; and in virtue of which,

which, they are all unite to, and have communion with one another in him. But this communion being altogether invisible, such as the union is, it is very different from that open and visible communion men have together in the sacrament of the supper; which is not so directly founded in real vital union to Christ (which is the privilege of true believers only,) as in a professed union to him, and to one another in the truth; being professedly agreed in and about the same principles: So that it is not only warrantable, but in a variety of cases necessary, to refuse to hold sacramental communion, even with such as we may judge in charity do really belong to the Head. And so much the more we are persuaded this is the case with them, so much the more are we bound in duty to testify against what is amiss, either in their principles or practice, Gal. ii. 11. 12. and to withdraw from brethren walking disorderly, whether in respect of principle or practice, is far from being inconsistent with due respect to their persons, or that charity the word of God calls us to have for them; which is, to wish them as well in soul, body, and estate as ourselves, and to be in readiness as occasion serves, to act toward them in a loving and beneficent manner.

It may here further be observed, that while those men have given themselves out to the world, as if they meant in some sort, to oppose the progress of defection in our mother church; they have at the same time, adopted such terms of ministerial and christian communion as she would yet be ashamed of. For tho' it may be perhaps alledged, she refuses few, if any, into her communion who apply for admission; yet, she has not as yet gone all the length, in any judicative capacity, to invite Episcopalians and Independents to communion with her, in her sealing-ordinances.

6. We may see the need ministers of the gospel have to exercise a needy dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the prayer of faith, to be much at the throne of his grace, as ever they would be found faithful. Their work is great, and who is sufficient for it? How great a matter is it for them to be faithful? Faithful to Christ, to themselves, and to the souls of those committed to their charge?

7. *Lastly,*

7. *Lastly*, We may see, that tho' the glory of God, is that which we are first and principally to have in our eye, in the whole of our conduct; yet, the prospect of the crown of life, is to be improven in a believing manner, as a sweet and powerful motive to excite us to the duty of faithfulness in our several stations. The lively hope of salvation, is an able helmet to the head in the day of trial. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The *second* use may be of exhortation. And,

First, Let us, who are in the station of ministers of the gospel, suffer the word of exhortation. Be thou faithful unto death; and in order hereunto,

Let us, being sensible of our own insufficiency for the faithful discharge of our duty to Christ, ourselves, the Church in general, or the particular flocks we stand more immediately connected with. I say, let us be concerned to maintain faith's dependence upon our Lord Jesus Christ, for all that furniture and through-bearing we need in his work. Whatever we need is in him, and we have his most gracious promise to rely upon, that it shall be communicate according to our necessities, John. xiv. 13. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Let us study to be more and more acquainted with the duties incumbent upon us in the difficult sphere in which we are called to move, and for this end, let us be much in the study of the word of God, joined with fervent prayer.

Let us make Christ crucified, the Alpha and Omega of our preaching. Let it be our real and hearty concern, to set him before our hearers, as that good all the promises contain, as the fulfilment of all the prophecies, and as the substance of all the types. Let us not be negligent in shewing unto men, their absolute need of an interest in him, their hearty welcome to receive him with all his fulness, as the free gift of God to them. Let us also shew them the way in which they can only come to be really and savingly interested in him, namely, their being brought
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the divine power, and efficacious working of the Holy Ghost, to embrace him by faith, Eph. ii. 8.

Let us not shun to declare unto our hearers the whole counsel of God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. And let us do it with plainness, earnestness, and that becoming boldness our Lord requires of us, in the management of a work, where, with his glory and the eternal welfare of precious souls stand so much connected. And let us always bear in mind for our encouragement, that however many trials we may meet with while we endeavour to act faithfully, and however small our success should be; our Lord and Master will not deal with us, at his second appearing, according to our success, but according to our faithfulness. For, saith the Apostle, in the name of all faithful ministers, 2 Cor. ii. 15. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them who are saved, and in them who perish." Our Lord does not say, be successful, as ever you expect the crown; but, "Be thou faithful, and I will give thee the crown."

Secondly, We shall shut up this discourse with a word of exhortation to you the people. You have heard something concerning the duty of those who are over you in the Lord. And if it is their indispensable duty to be faithful in the service of Christ, and in the service of your faith; then, it must be your indispensable duty to receive their message with faith and love.

Let it therefore be your concern, cordially to comply with the exhortation you have, James i. 21. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Love, reverence and honour your faithful ministers in the Lord. This you are bound to do, both on his account who sends them to you; and for their works sake: And the more faithfully they act, the more you are bound to love them. Be ready to yield obedience to them, in so far as they point out your duty from the word of God, Heb. xiii. 17. "Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: For they watch for your souls, as they who must give account."

Pray for your ministers, that they may be upheld and strengthened of the Lord, in the faithful discharge of their duty, and that utterance may be given them, that they may open their mouths boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Wait carefully upon the dispensation of gospel ordinances, and be much in the prayer of faith, for the blessing of God upon them, that your souls may reap real edification thereby.

Endeavour, in your places and stations, to comply with the exhortation, *be thou faithful unto death*. Study to be acquainted with a life of faith on Christ, as ever you would be faithful to him. Abide by his cause, and a testimony for the same; be concerned stedfastly to cleave to the truth as it is in Jesus; and be not wanting to use your best endeavours, to hand down a testimony for the truth to the generations yet to come. And study through grace, you who are among the faithful in Christ Jesus, to be giving daily evidence of your faith in, and faithfulness to him, by a tender, cautious, circumspect, and inoffensive walk and conversation before the world. And keep the crown of life in your eye, as your encouragement under the trials to which your faithfulness to Christ may expose you.

In one word, let us all, ministers and people, endeavour conscientiously to aim at being faithful, and faithful to the death. And to this end, may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant: Make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



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